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RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA 2779  
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RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 1128  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DAR ES SALAAM 000060

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E JLIDDLE, INR/RAA FEHRENREICH, ISN, NEA,  
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SUBJECT: TANZANIA AND IRAN SIGN DEFENSE MOU

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1B. IIR 6 959 0096 09  
1C. 2008 DAR ES SALAAM 443

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Classified By: Classified By: CDA Larry E. Andre, Jr., for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary. Tanzania and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding on military cooperation and technology transfer during Tanzanian Minister of Defense Hussein Mwinyi's visit to Tehran in late January. The announcement of the MOU in the Iranian press came as a surprise to many in Tanzania, apparently including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While the significance of the MOU itself is probably limited, its signing demonstrates poor coordination within the GOT. End Summary.

1. (C) Iranian news agencies, subsequently echoed by China's Xinhua news service, ran stories on the January 21 signing of a Tanzania-Iran MOU on military cooperation and technology transfer. According to the reports, Mwinyi, the first Tanzanian Defense Minister to visit Iran since before 1979, came to Tehran at the invitation of Iranian Defense Minister Najjar. The agreement signed by the ministers included sharing military and defense expertise and exchanging delegations for service, technical and field training. The visit and MOU have not been reported in Tanzanian media.

1. (C) On January 26, MFA Multilateral Division officer Noel Kaganda told Poloff that the news reports took MFA by surprise. Kaganda had been able to verify the existence of the MOU, but had no information on its content. However, he said the GOT understands U.S. concerns about military cooperation with Iran and insisted that the GOT is not in violation of any UN Security Council resolutions concerning Iran (see ref a). Kaganda said the Ministry of Defense is authorized to act autonomously on international issues. MFA officials have previously noted to us that Tanzania's longstanding oil debt to Iran puts the GOT in a difficult position to resist Iranian requests.

1. (S/NF) While MOD has not been forthcoming about the MOU, Minister of Home Affairs Lawrence Masha told DATT that Mwinyi's travel to Iran was known within the GOT (ref b). Masha said ministers may travel officially to Iran (or other

countries) without formal GOT permission as long as the host state is paying. Masha downplayed the significance of the MOU, saying that its signing did not represent a shift in Tanzania's relationship with Iran or the acquisition of military weapons or equipment. Masha claimed that a policy shift would have required approval by an interagency body chaired by President Kikwete and consisting of the ministers for Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Home Affairs.

¶ 15. (C) Mwinyi's visit follows other recent high-level Tanzanian trips to Tehran. In October 2008, FM Membe attended the fourth Tanzania-Iran Joint Permanent Commission, where he signed agreements on cooperation in several areas, including agriculture. During the visit, Membe was quoted in Iranian news as critical of UN sanctions. Following a formal Embassy request for clarification, MFA responded with a diplomatic note affirming that Tanzania was "bound by UN decisions including sanctions against members, in this case Iran," while stressing both Tanzania's friendship with the U.S. and its ongoing relations with Iran.

¶ 16. (SBU) Also in October, Zanzibar President Karume, his wife and almost two dozen senior and mid-level Zanzibar government officials made a six-day "State visit" to Iran. During the visit, Iranian press and protocol treated Zanzibar as an independent nation in free association with Tanzania, and Karume met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Karume's visit led to negotiations for a Joint Commission for Cooperation, which has resulted in Iran sending instructors to establish a Persian language department at the State University of Zanzibar. There were also discussions of setting up branches of Iranian universities in Zanzibar for electronic degree programs and technical education in industry, agriculture and fisheries. Iran also promised

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loans for small-scale industry and road paving on Pemba.  
Note: Karume's visit should be seen in the context of the thousand-year history of Iranian trade and settlement on the "Swahili Coast" and the Zanzibar islands, where indigenous people are still referred to as "Shirazis" (see ref c). End note.

¶ 17. (C) President Kikwete himself has not visited Iran. In September, he told Ambassador Green that he did not consider Iran a major concern for Tanzania domestically. Kikwete said the divisions within Tanzania's Muslim population made it difficult for Iran to spread its influence.

¶ 18. (C) Comment: The signing of the MOU in and of itself is unlikely to change substantially the ongoing relationship and cultural connections between Tanzania and Iran. There are no indications that Tanzania intends to purchase or receive Iranian arms. However, Defense Minister Mwinyi's actions underscore the often weak executive authority within President Kikwete's administration. End Comment.

ANDRE